

## SUMMARY OF THE NCHR REPORT ON KIZIBA REFUGEE CAMP INCIDENT

From 20 to 22 February 2018, Congolese refugees walked out of Kiziba refugee camp allegedly protesting against cuts in food assistance, reduction in teachers' salary and the rumors that the camp was to be closed, and that all refugees would be given Rwandan nationality.

The three days protests turned violent and in efforts to contain the situation, after all peaceful means had failed, Rwanda National Police (RNP) used force and as the result some refugees lost their lives, others wounded and some arrested.

Following the incident, the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) launched an investigation into the incident. The investigations took place from 22<sup>nd</sup> to 23 February and from 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> March 2018.

During the investigations the NCHR, visited the area of incident (Kiziba refugee camp). The NCHR received testimonies from refugees who were present at the area of incident. The Commission held interviews with different authorities including the District Mayor (Karongi), Governor of the Western Province, Senior Officers in the RNP, Officials from MIDMAR/MINEMA, the Director General of Kibuye referral hospital and Head of UNHCR Field Officer/Karongi. In addition, the Commission received and analyzed documents and visited stations where arrested individuals were detained.

During the investigations, the Commission focused on the following:

- To know the reasons that pushed refugees to strike;
- Whether MIDMAR/MINEMA and UNHCR had knowledge of the issues facing refugees;
- Ascertain what the local authorities, UNHCR and Security services did after realizing that refugees started protests;
- To know the conduct of refugees during protests;
- To know the conduct and response from Police during the protest;
- To ascertain the consequences of protests and
- To know the follow up actions after the situation was normalized.

### **The findings from investigations**

From the investigations the Commission found that:

1. There was food shortage due to cuts in assistance. This triggered protests. However, the Commission found that, the protests were unlawful as they contravened the laws and regulations of the hosting state regarding the procedure on how protests should be conducted.

2. The Commission found that refugees' complaints were known to the refugee management and relevant authorities had had meetings with refugees in the view to addressing raised issues.
3. The Commission found that security services ensured the security of refugees who were protesting from the beginning of the protests. Different authorities (District, Province, UNHCR and RNP) visited protestors several times and asked them to go back to the camp while the authorities try to find durable solutions for their complaints. The demonstrators refused.
4. The Commission found that, during protests refugees demonstrated bad conduct and did not want to cooperate. This is demonstrated by the fact that they organized protests in violation of rules and procedures established by the hosting State. They invaded the UNHCR offices in Karongi and rendered it nonoperational.
5. The Commission found that while demonstrating, refugees had arms and used them against security services.
6. The Commission found that security service (RNP) had used all peaceful and less harmful means to contain the situation which was swiftly escalating but in vein. All legal requirements and procedure to harmlessly disperse the protestors were employed but received violent response from the crowd.
7. The Commission found that live ammunition was used as the last resort after violent and organized attack was launched by a group of demonstrators against Police. Therefore, the Commission found that Security Services did not violate the law as the use of force come as the last alternative to defend the lives police officers, other refugees who were not involved in the demonstrations and neighboring community which were in imminent danger.
8. The Commission found that all necessary measures were taken to insure that those who were wounded or traumatized from the incident get needed assistance and their families are promptly informed of the matter.
9. The Commission found that those who were arrested in the aftermath of the protests had access to legal counsel.

## **Consequences of the protests**

- The Commission found that 11 people lost their lives in the incident. 54 people were wounded including 8 Police Officers. 34 refugees considered as organizers of the protest were arrested immediately after the incident. 13 were released upon completion of preliminary investigation and remaining 21 are being prosecuted before courts.
- Currently, the cases are before the intermediate Court (TGI) of Karongi.